



**Sir Robert Neill MP**  
**Chair of the Justice Select Committee**  
House of Commons  
LONDON  
SW1A 0AA

10th July 2020

Dear Sir Bob,

### **ASSAULTS ON EMERGENCY WORKERS**

I am writing to update you on our plans to consult on doubling the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker, in line with the Government's manifesto commitment. This consultation is directed at emergency worker groups, as defined by the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018, and other key stakeholders, including the judiciary. The consultation will focus on whether the maximum penalty for this offence should be increased from 12 months to 2 years, seeking feedback on how the legislation is operating in practice. We plan to commence engagement in July and a media announcement will precede this.

We recognise the enormous contribution made by our emergency service workers and have supported measures which afford them further protection and signal the seriousness of committing offences against them.

In 2018 we strengthened the law with the Assaults on Emergency Workers (Offences) Act 2018 ('the 2018 Act'). The 2018 Act modifies the criminal offence of assault or battery for instances where it is committed against emergency workers, such as police officers, prison officers, fire personnel and many frontline healthcare workers, who are acting in the course of their functions, with a maximum penalty of 12 months imprisonment. The 2018 Act also provides that more serious assaults committed against emergency workers may be aggravated on sentence within the current statutory maxima for these offences. These offences include assault occasioning actual bodily harm (five years' maximum penalty), assault occasioning grievous bodily harm (five years' maximum penalty) and assault occasioning grievous bodily harm with intent (maximum life imprisonment).

In our manifesto, we committed to consult on doubling the maximum penalty for assaulting an emergency worker. Recent events during the Covid-19 pandemic have shown what a challenging role our emergency workers have, risking their lives to keep the public safe. This consultation will help us to ensure that emergency workers have sufficient protection from the law to enable them to carry out their duties, and the police and the courts have the powers they need to deal effectively with those who use violence against such workers. We note that the offence of assault with intent to resist arrest carries a maximum penalty of 2 years.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Robert Buckland

**RT HON ROBERT BUCKLAND QC MP**